

# UNCLASSIFIED

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SOUTHERNAIR MIA

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THANK YOU

R.M. MASON

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Marine Corps recruiting posters are seen everywhere, and T-shirts with the Marine logo and such mottos as "Mess with the best, Die with the rest" are treasured throughout the CONTRAS.

C. Training at CIM is closely budgeted and rigidly scheduled, with plenty of iron discipline, "troop and stomp", double time and rugged physical training between classroom instruction. Large, hand-built classrooms are equipped with benches and writing surfaces, blackboards, and PA systems (which worked). Instructors were well prepared with training aids, and were admirably military in appearance. Plenty of DI's lurked in the background to insure attention, and goof-offs were forced to wear red helmets. All the instructors were combat experienced and proven leaders. A number were graduates of U. S. military courses in Panama and the States-parachute jump school qualification and Ranger training. All movement from one area to another was in formation--usually accompanied by traditional marching cadence or lusty fighting songs (~~one to the tune of Red River Valley~~). In short, this place was gung ho! Troops were in uniform, had boot haircuts, and seemed a husky bunch above average in size for Nicaraguans. Ages averaged about 18 years, and the illiteracy rate was close to 40%. Yes

D. Boot camp was 6 weeks, 7 days a week, followed by 2 weeks equivalent to Infantry Training Regiment. Weapons qualification requirements are rigid, and all hands are required to be proficient on one of the most formidable confidence (i.e. obstacle) courses I have seen. In advanced stages, the men are taught rappelling techniques, and practice descending and ascending a 40 foot tower built on the high ridge occupied by the CIM headquarters. About 800 men were in training at the time of my visit--divided in three levels: boot camp, NCO, and the equivalent of PLC or officer candidate. The latter occupies a camp on a high ridge accessible only by a breathtaking, steep trail up a jungle hillside--not recommended for the fainthearted--and one which I am the first American to climb because of my determination to see everything. Yes

E. Trainees at CIM are billeted in long barracks constructed of native materials and roofed with plastic sheeting. There are no bunks--all hands rig standard jungle hammocks. Packs and web gear are slung neatly from the woven pole walls at the head of each hammock, along with each man's rifle, usually an AK-47. Ammunition, except for security guards is stored in a central armory.